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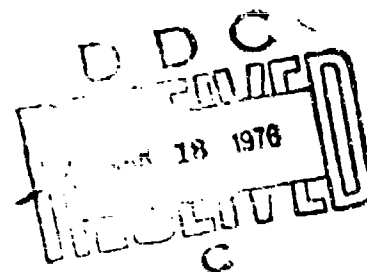
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2 OCTOBER 1975

COMMUNIST SUBVERSION, A SERIOUS THREAT TO LATIN AMERICA

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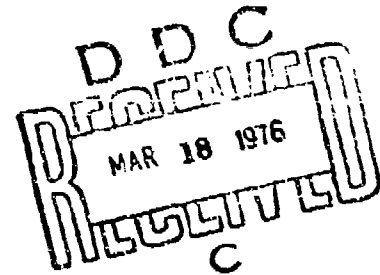
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US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
2 October 1975

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AUTHOR: Jack E Fincham, COL, FA
TITLE: Communist Subversion, a Serious Threat to Latin America
FORMAT: Essay
DATE: 2 October 1975 PAGES: 14

Latin America continues to be a target for communist subversion. Although the communist parties in Latin America are fragmented and are not as strong as in the past, their goal of securing power for worldwide communism has not changed. Subversion is one of the tools that they are using to obtain this goal. The governments of Latin America realize the threat and are taking active action to control subversive activities. This essay examines the status of communist subversive activities in Latin America, the decline of agrarian guerrilla movements and how subversive activities can be controlled. Data for the essay were gathered through research with emphasis on current news releases and books written on the topic. The conclusion reached in this paper is that communist subversion is not a serious threat to Latin America, because it can be controlled.

COMMUNIST SUBVERSION

Communist subversion has been and continues to be a threat to the countries of Latin America. The goal of the communist in Latin America is a long range one - to impose socialism as a system of government in as many countries as possible. If necessary, in order to obtain their goal, they will follow the path of subversion whenever the opportunity presents itself.

This paper will address the current situation that exists in Latin America. It will show why and how communist subversion can exist and how it can be controlled. In the past the agrarian guerrilla was the primary threat, but today the emphasis has shifted to the city. Special attention will be given to the Soviet Union and its influence upon subversive activities. The security of Latin America depends upon how effective the governments can control subversive activities while actively taking steps to improve the quality of life of its people.

"In every country there is a restless striving for a better life. Coming as it does at a time of uprooting change, it brings to many a vague unease that all systems of society are out of control. In such a setting, all American nations are a tempting target for communist subversion. In fact, it is plainly evident that such subversion is a reality today with alarming potential.... Clearly, the opinion in the United States that communism is no longer a serious factor in the Western Hemisphere is thoroughly wrong."¹

The above facts were reported in 1969 by Nelson A. Rockefeller in his report to the President on his United States Presidential Mission for the Western Hemisphere. His mission found the countries of Latin America deeply concerned about the threat that communist subversion posed to them.

In 1973 it was reported by the Special Consultative Committee on Security against Subversion of International Communism, the Organization of American States that:

"It now appears easy to understand how, in spite of "peaceful coexistence," our people in the free world are the object and target of communist international subversion, complex in nature, which takes the shape of diplomatic struggles, terrorism, guerrillas, assaults on private property, kidnappings, infiltration of the church and a constant struggle to attract the minds of the student, worker and peasant youth."²

Under the pretense of "peaceful coexistence" the communists have continued their subversive activities. The Special Consultative Committee on Security against Subversion of International Communism concluded "that communism would use "peaceful coexistence" to the maximum in its various aspects: the path of armed subversion, the diplomatic, economic and cultural paths, in order to attain its ultimate objective, world domination."³ Therefore, subversive activities is a strategy that the communist will follow.

Latin America is an attractive target, especially for the Soviets. As late as 1975, Leon Couré in his study on the Soviet Union penetration of Latin America stated:

"It is important to recognize that the opening of the door which had led that region (Latin America) to become an increasingly independent factor in world affairs and to assume a growing role in the Third World activities, makes it an attractive, albeit still largely unwilling target for Soviet efforts to penetrate it and to influence the direction of its development."⁴

Thus, Latin America stands vulnerable to attack from outside forces. Because of their position on "peaceful coexistence," the Soviets can not openly support subversive activities. They will continue to support the local communist parties secretly.

CONDITIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

The Latin American scene is one of continuous change. Intense nationalism prevails and the people are experiencing "rising expectations." They are demanding changes through social reforms and economic growth.

Latin Americans have intense pride in their countries. Along with their strong desire for nationalism, there is a strong "Anti-American" feeling in most countries. This feeling exists because they believe that the US has taken advantage of them for many years. The communists are attempting to use this feeling to their advantage.

Although the Latin American wants to determine his own destiny without outside interference, he is faced with many problems. Solutions to the majority of these problems will not take place in the short time frame.

There has been a steady movement of the population from the rural areas to the cities. This has created enormous problems for the urban areas. With a rapid expanding population influx as well as about a 3 percent a year population growth, there is not enough adequate housing, jobs, capital outlay, or educational facilities to accommodate the people. The illiteracy rate is high, although it has improved in recent years. Approximately 25 percent of the labor force is unemployed. Those who are employed receive low wages. With over 50 percent of the population less than 20 years old, the youths are demanding changes as student organizations have been infiltrated by the communist. The crime rate is high. Inflation is high and the cost of living continues to rise.

The communists have taken advantage of this situation by placing emphasis on the urban guerrilla. While it is difficult to organize an effective guerrilla organization, the governments have also found it difficult to control the activities of the guerrilla.

The living conditions in the rural areas are also bad. The peasant is dissatisfied and desires land reforms. Some countries have already initiated land reform programs. The rural areas still do not produce the amount of agricultural products that are needed although this has gradually improved in recent years. The peasant is also faced with like problems that we find in the urban areas. The illiteracy is high, population growth is high, living conditions need improvement, plus the high cost of living has affected him too.

Because of the intense nationalism and the determination the Latin Americans have to eliminate foreign influences, foreign investments have become a problem. The investments are needed for economic growth, but because of recent expropriations of US investments, foreign investors have become cautious. The sensible leaders realize the importance of foreign investments and are encouraging foreign countries to invest.

The Latin Americas need more access to favorable trade. They desire removal of trade barriers. Their domestic markets have reached their limits. An outside market is needed in order to create more jobs.

The governments have not been able to solve these problems. In recent years we have found the military and the church taking active roles in politics. The trend has been for the military to take control of the governments. The military elite, with its knowledge of security matters, have been successful in most cases. In the past the communist

considered the military and the church as the protection for the capitalists, but today they consider them as a potential base for revolutionary activities.

In recent years a lot of changes have taken place in the Latin American Catholic Church. Because of the worldwide revolutionary process, the Christian religion has been attacked. As a result the church has been weakened. In some cases the clergy has become critical of the conservative policies of the church. The priests have actively supported the communist because they felt this was the best possible way to force the changes that are needed. All of this has had an adverse effect on the role of the church. The church is being used and they do not fully realize it.

Because the people desire better living conditions, Latin Americans are subject to communist subversion. The governments realize that changes must be initiated and are taking actions to eliminate as many of the irritants as possible.

At the same time the communists are actively trying to subvert the governments. Some of the activities are planned and directed by the local parties while others are the results of outside direction. The Soviets "work out the tactics to be followed in each individual country, part of which will be put into practice by respective communist parties."⁵ Emphasis is placed on using the worker, the student and the peasant to carry out subversive activities.

The worker and the trade unions have always been a target for the communist. They have been successful in infiltrating the trade unions. By using the trade unions, the communists have been able to

use subversive activities to achieve their economic goals. For example, "the trade unions and the majority of all worker's organizations can sabotage the production and shipping in order to raise costs."⁶ At the same time the Soviets can move in and establish trade. Also, the communists have been able to create chaotic conditions through labor strikes in order to enforce their will upon the governments.

The student continues to be a source of trouble for the authorities. The communists have infiltrated student organizations. The students are convinced changes must be made in order to improve the living conditions. "There are some students who are committed to reform within the established system and then there are others who are irrevocably committed to total revolution."⁷ The communists use the students. "Professional agitators, whose status as students is guaranteed because of liberal rules, often carry their political banner within the confines of the universities."⁸ The student has become an effective tool for the communist.

Surprising, the intellectuals have been a source for subversive activities. These individuals for various reasons are not satisfied with the status quo. Studies and investigations have shown that "the headquarters organizers of guerrilla campaigns have been almost exclusively intellectuals such as doctors, engineers and students."⁹

AGARIAN GUERRILLAS

Agarian guerrillas were active in Latin America up to the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia in October 1967. For a period of time they were quiet. Today they have become somewhat active again and have been "actively recruiting youth."¹⁰

The agrarian guerrilla movement is not dead. A quick scan of current news releases will reveal that they are active in Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile and other countries. Although they are active, they are not effective. Luigi Einaudi in his book on Latin America stated:

"Rural insurgency, though capable of provoking continuing trouble in countries with long traditions of internal violence, no longer appear to be a viable or appealing revolutionary strategy. A successful violent revolution on a national scale did not exist and could not be readily created even by determined bonds of rural guerrillas"¹¹

The governments through the use of military and security forces have displayed a vastly increased capability to handle agrarian guerrillas. At the same time the governments have taken action to eliminate some of the irritants such as land reform and improved living conditions. The communist "without giving up on the rural guerrilla, the primary efforts are being switched to activities in populated areas, through the system of urban guerrillas."¹² This is another reason why the agrarian guerrilla is not the threat that he use to be. The emphasis has been switched.

The decline of the agrarian guerrilla does not mean that the communists have abandoned their subversive activities. The Special Consultative Committee on Security against Subversion of International Communism, the Organization of American States stated:

"In spite of the failure of guerrillas in Venezuela, Peru, Columbia, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic, international communism has not abandoned its efforts to impose its doctrine in the developing countries of the Americas. On the contrary, the latest events show both the ever-increasing interest that the high-ranking leaders of communism particularly those of the Soviet Union, are showing in Latin America's revolutionary process, and their exploitation of the growing demand of the working masses for political development and economic change in their countries"¹³

THREAT OR NUISANCE

The backers of subversive movements will spare no efforts to try to force their will upon the people. "Subversive factions will continue to operate in a vast territory of the Americas"¹⁴ The Special Consultative Committee on Security Against Subversion of International Communism, Organization of American States also stated:

"Subversion in our hemisphere (Latin America) has traversed and presently continues to cover the whole spectrum of violence: thefts, assaults, bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, aircraft hijacking, and strikes by workers and students"¹⁵

This was true in 1973 and is also true today. A quick glance at the news media will reveal guerrilla attacks, kidnappings and executions, terrorisms, riots, and etc.

"Communism in Latin America has become increasingly fragmented in recent years"¹⁶. The current rift between the Soviet Union and China has helped to create this situation. As a result there are conflicts between the different communist factions within Latin America. However, the Soviet Union influence is still the most prominent within the parties. "We can expect the Soviet Union to continue in the effort to future its interest as an important part of the communist movement."¹⁷

The Soviet Union is focusing its interest and main thrust toward the buildup in Latin America of opposition and hostility toward the United States. One of the constant themes being exploited by the communist is the "Anti-Americanism" and hostility toward the US. The Soviet leaders claim to see a decline in our ability to impose our will upon

Latin America. The Soviets hope to capitalize on this "by focusing their actions toward diplomatic political and economical actions whenever an opening presents itself"¹⁸

Presently, there seems to be a decline in Latin America in fear of the Soviets and communism. Therefore, the Soviets have been able to broaden its diplomatic and political base. The improved relations through detente between the US and the Soviets has helped in this area. "Nevertheless, the region's suspicion of Moscow's motivations and actions can easily be revived, as occurred in 1970 with the discovery of a group of guerrillas in Mexico who had attended a Soviet University prior to their training in North Korea."¹⁹ There will always be some suspicions.

The expansion of Soviet cultural relations with the different Latin American countries should result in more exchange students. This will allow the Soviets to broaden their subversive training base through student activities. Potential employers realize this and "tend to be suspicious of Soviet bloc diplomas and are reluctant to hire such graduates,"²⁰ because they realize these individuals are potential leaders for subversive activities.

The Soviets are also broadening their trade relations with Latin America. By doing so, they hope to improve their position with the trade unions as well as denying the US access to critical sources of raw materials that we need. The Soviets have played an important role on economic activities in Latin America. They believe improved economic relations will improve their position and generate true goodwill. Such relations will help to weaken the free world's position in Latin America.

The communists will use any tool available to enforce their will upon the Latin Americans.

The objective of the communists is to subvert established order. Emphasis is being placed on the masses. "Direct subversive activity by radio broadcast directed to Latin American countries is being beamed from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Communist China as well as Cuba. At least 425 hours of communist propaganda are beamed toward Latin America every week"²¹ The transistor radio has improved communications to the masses. The communists are taking advantage of this.

Although emphasis is allegedly being placed on "peaceful coexistence," communist subversion is still a reality. "The Soviet Union continues to be actively involved in a wide range of secret operations in Latin America."²² "The Latin American governments have accused Soviet diplomats of illegal activities as incitement to strike, involvement in student riots and attempted coup d'etat, recruitment of local agents, distribution of hostile propaganda, financing terrorism and training urban guerrillas. Soviet KGB officers have been masquerading as Soviet diplomats."²³

Therefore, Latin American governments are being very cautious in their dealings with the Soviets. They realize that "communist propaganda, political agitation and espionage activities often increase after a country establishes diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union"²⁴ The Soviets support clandestine activities and attempt to exploit "Anti-American" feelings.

Colonel F. F. Woerner, a member of the faculty at the Army War College stated: "The USSR and the PRC have maintained a low profile in their attempts to establish contacts in Latin America. I am not concerned about communist subversion. Ten nations have already rejected communism. The Latin Americans are not impressed with what happens in Cuba. The Allende rule in Chile was an education. They saw the in-fighting by the socialists. The end result has been a loss of fascination for communism. The communist parties have become fragmented. Although terrorism has not been eliminated, it has not been effective."²⁵

Communist subversion is not a serious threat. It is only a nuisance. The governments of Latin America have subversion under control. Latin Americans are basically conservative and reject revolutionary type activities. They are still too much like their Spanish and Portuguese forefathers. The small elite will continue to control. The middle class is too unstable and conservative to go to communism.

However, we must remember that communist subversion is still real. A lesson can be learned from Cuba. Castro's initial movement was not communist inspired. The movement eventually came under the communist control. The same is possible for other countries.

CONTROLLING SUBVERSION

Subversive type activities have intensified throughout the world in recent years. It was successful in areas of Southeast Asia, China, Cyprus, Cuba as well as other countries. To be successful such activities must be dynamic, appealing, and must be able to sustain its momentum.

The situation we find in Latin America is favorable for subversive activities; however, it can be overcome and controlled. Emphasis must be placed on improving the social, economic and political conditions that have become irritants to the people. Their quality of life must be improved. Improved living conditions will help to eliminate the fascination of communism.

The governments realize what subversion can do and they are taking steps to control it. Different countries are approaching the problem in different ways. "Some are copying Vietnamese and Soviet methods of repression."²⁶ Others are using "torture techniques on their political dissenters, putting public enemies in institutions"²⁷ and some are simply disposing of their political enemies by execution. President Maria Peron of Argentina in a recent monitored broadcast stated: "The government is working continuously to eliminate everything that represents subversion and is making every effort to put a definite end to violence of all types."²⁸ Such statements and actions are typical throughout Latin America.

Although the governments are stronger and are taking positive action by using force to control subversive activities, they will never be able to fully control it unless they also show the people they are interested in them. They must clearly exhibit true concern for the people and take steps necessary to improve their living conditions. Only then will they be able to bring subversive activities under full control. Subversion can not succeed unless the people support it.

Latin America is still a continent of change. Communist subversion will continue to present a problem unless it is controlled. The Soviet and communist leaders of the world claim to see signs of a worldwide shift to the left which definitely includes Latin America. A comprehensive Soviet survey of the world saw Latin America as follows:

"The southern part of the American continent continues to seethe, and it is there that considerable leftwing forces are already operating in the arena. It is being confirmed that it is impossible to halt the revolutionary and democratic process in Latin American.... The struggle on the continent of Latin America is not dying down. Opportunities exist on for a broad counteroffensive by the democratic forces."²⁹

The communists will continue to take advantage of the opportunities they find in Latin America and subversion will continue in a vast portion of Latin America. The backers of subversive activities will spare no effort to confuse the public in order to gain support. The free world must continue to support and work with the governments of Latin America. Subversion can be controlled.

As stated in the beginning of this paper the goal of the communist is a long range one - to impose socialism as a system of government in as many countries as possible. Subversion is just one of the tools available to the communist. One must realize that they are ruthless and they believe that the end justifies the means. In the past they have been successful. "Before 1917 there was not a single communist regime in the world, but since 1917 communists have gained power in 22 countries or parts of countries, so that today about one third of the people on the globe are ruled by communist governments"³⁰

The communist will continue to use subversive activities while trying to camouflage and deny their involvement in most cases. They hope to be able to gradually convince the masses that the governments are not taking action fast enough to improve their lot. This is why quick elimination of the known irritants is the best method for the governments to follow.

Not only can subversion be controlled, but it must be controlled if Latin America is going to continue to grow.

Jack E. Fincham
JACK E FINCHAM
Colonel, US Army

FOOTNOTES

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3. Ibid, p 7.
4. Leon Goure and Morris Rothenberg, Soviet Penetration of Latin America, p VII.
5. Alphonse Max, Guerrillas in Latin America, p 1.
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7. General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, p 37.
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10. Alphonse Max, p 19.
11. Luigi R. Einaudi, Beyond Cuba: Latin America Takes Charge of Its Future, p 35.
12. General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, p 22.
13. Ibid, p 15.
14. Ibid, p 21.
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16. Donald C. Herman, The Communist Tide in Latin America, p 9.
17. Ibid, p 186.
18. Leon Goure and Morris Rothenberg, p 127.
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20. Ibid, p 166.
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22. James D. Zheberge, The Soviet Presence in Latin America, p 26.
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